

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SOURCE'S INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS


The German technicians and their families were housed in a large apartment building some fifteen minutes' walking distance from the plant. Some Soviet employees of Arsenal No. 1, designers, engineers, and other high level employees, were also quartered in this plant-owned building. The German technicians were strictly limited in their independence of movement both in and without the city of Kiev. They were allowed to proceed without escort only from their apartment building to the plant and to a nearby market. They also could walk unescorted in the immediate vicinity (200 meters) of the apartment building. But they were required to be escorted by "interpreters" on any other excursions, for example, a shopping trip to the center of Kiev or a Sunday outing.

In the event that a German wished to visit a Soviet colleague living in the apartment building, he was required to inform the resident interpreter of his intentions. Although such visits were not forbidden, it was evident that the Soviet authorities frowned upon close friendships between Soviet and German technicians.

We Germans therefore were not able to develop any close personal ties with Soviet fellow workers. Outside of working hours, social intercourse between the two groups was confined to occasional visits and a chance beer in a nearby tavern. I personally was further limited in contact with Soviet society by my knowledge of Russian language, i. e., I know only a few sentences of "kitchen" and "workshop" Russian. German was generally spoken when conversing with Soviet acquaintances, as the latter usually spoke quite fluent German.

PLANNING AND PRODUCTION PROCEDURES

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1. 
2. Shop conferences for Soviet workers were held at least once a week for the purpose of encouraging them to meet production quotas. After a talk by the shop chief, dealing with current production problems, agitators from the plant's "political committee" held forth with lectures coupling current political problems with the necessity of meeting production goals. When production was lagging toward the end of a month, workers were frequently asked at these meetings to approve resolutions calling for overtime work. It was my impression that the Soviet workers voted for the resolutions with approval, although I actually do not know what was said at these meetings because I am unable to understand Russian.
3. Since my shop assembled instruments from parts prepared by other plant shops, its production tempo was closely dependent

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WORKING CONDITIONS

10. Soviet workers in the instrument assembly shop and in other shops engaged in serial production were paid almost entirely according to piece rate wages. They were also paid a basic wage for their presence at work benches (Anwesenheitsgelder), but this was a small percentage of total wages. This basic wage, however, was of some importance. As mentioned above, workers in the instrument assembly shop were often without work during the first days of each month.
11. Listed below are typical monthly wages for Soviet workers and employees at Arsenal No. 1:

Monthly Wages (in rubles)

Trainees (usually girls)	300 - 400
Average skilled worker (assembler)	700 - 800
Best skilled workers (small percentage of total)	800 - 1000
Stakhanovites	1500 - 1800
Designers (average base pay)	1200
Designers (with bonuses)	1500
Chief Designer	2000 - 2500

12. The total salaries of designers and engineers depended to a great degree on bonuses. It was possible for a designer to earn as much as 2000 rubles per month, although the average received from 1200 to 1500 rubles. German engineers and technicians were paid higher salaries than their Soviet counterparts. The average German engineer received 2200 rubles per month. Initially I was paid 3000 rubles per month, a very high salary, because of the importance attached to geodetic instruments. This was later reduced to 2500 rubles per month as a result of job reclassification.
13. Most stakhanovites earned this distinction and high wages by dint of long hours of work, rather than by any outstanding productivity. This perhaps explains why the average worker apparently was not jealous of a stakhanovite's achievements, why there was no apparent concern on the part of the former that stakhanovites would raise production norms. It is my belief that the average Soviet worker was too indifferent, too passive to get excited about the pampering of favored workers.
14. In this connection I wish to add that most stakhanovites in my shop were Party members. I do not believe that this indicated favoritism because of Party membership. Stakhanovites really had to put great physical effort into their work in order to achieve and maintain their positions. Their production successes were largely the result of their willingness to work overtime. The fact that special effort and sacrifice were demanded of Party members, and in most cases Party members responded to this demand, probably explains their dominance among the stakhanovites. Party training conditioned them for such work.
15. Moreover, I noted no reluctance on the part of the plant management to demote Party members from positions which called for technical proficiencies they did not possess. I know of no

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cases of unqualified technicians who were assigned to positions solely on the basis of Party membership. On the basis of these observations, I conclude that technical proficiencies were more important than Party membership in professional advancement.

16. Similarly, women in my plant suffered from no apparent employment discrimination. Women workers received the same pay as men engaged in identical work. However, it was true that women were generally assigned to less lucrative jobs than male workers.
17. The instrument assembly shop normally operated on an eight-hour day, six-day week. Overtime work was often done on an individual basis by Soviet workers who were interested in the additional wages. As indicated above, the entire shop also was frequently required to work overtime in order to meet monthly production quotas.
18. Strict penalties were imposed on infractions of plant regulations. Tardiness was punished by fines which were deducted from wages. I believe that sentences as high as one to two years' corrective labor were meted out to workers guilty of absenteeism. It was not very difficult to obtain permission for sick leave. Only a certificate from the plant's clinic was required. This, however, did not lead to too much abuse of sick leave rights, as Soviet workers normally could not afford to miss too many days of work. They received little or no pay when on sick leave. Theft of plant property was an invitation for a stiff sentence of corrective labor. A worker caught stealing a part worth perhaps 25 rubles could expect to spend about eight years in a forced labor camp. No attempt was made to relate the value of the property to the length of sentence. These convictions were rather meant to serve as a stern example to other workers. It is my opinion that such sentences were necessary to curb the Soviets' light-fingered tendencies.
19. A worker held responsible for defective production or for breaking a part was obliged to pay for the subsequent loss to the plant in material and labor costs. This regulation was generally strictly enforced, although occasionally a foreman would look the other way when a pretty young girl broke an expensive lens. I think this regulation was necessary because of the indifference and the lack of conscientiousness of the average Soviet worker. It therefore had the positive effect of diminishing waste and defective production. I noticed no adverse results, such as restricting initiative and independence of action.
20. It was my impression that the average Soviet worker in this plant was satisfied with working conditions there. These conditions were considered as perfectly normal by the Soviet worker, even when he had to work several additional shifts at the end of the month. Strict conformance to an eight-hour day is unknown in the Soviet Union. In fact, it was apparent that the goal of the average worker was to earn enough money to pay for his food and drink. He was satisfied once these two basic requirements were fulfilled. In this connection I wish to stress that a Western observer would make a great mistake to view Soviet conditions through Western eyes. The Soviet worker is

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too primitive to be sensitive to the things which concern his counterpart in Western Europe.

CONTROLS ON EMPLOYMENT

21. Workers at Arsenal No. 1 were not free to obtain employment elsewhere on their own initiative and decision. A worker had to apply for release with the plant director if, for example, he wished to accept a job in another plant which paid more money. Applications were normally not approved.
22. The plant director usually contacted a worker's shop chief after the former requested a job release. If the shop chief replied that, "Vanka's a good worker; we need him here", or, "He can work all right, but he's just mad because he wants another job where he can get more money", the application was turned down. Occasionally a person was given a release if he had good reasons for such and appealed to the director's feelings. I recall the case of one young worker who was granted permission to seek other employment because he wanted to attend night school. Long overtime hours at Arsenal No. 1 had interfered with his schooling.
23. A person whose application for a job release had been rejected by the plant director could appeal to the ministry for a reversal of the decision. This recourse was seldom successful.
24. Soviet plant employees, particularly skilled specialists, were frequently ordered by the ministry to report to other, often far-distant, plants where their services were particularly in need. These personnel requisitions often resulted in disputes between the ministry and Arsenal No. 1 over the services of valued employees.
25. Several foremen complained to me of their inability to obtain a job release in order to take up more lucrative employment elsewhere. Even so, dissatisfaction with employment restriction was possibly greater than these individual complaints would indicate. It is likely that there were many dissatisfied workers who did not openly complain because they could see no way out of their predicament.

CAPABILITIES OF SOVIET WORKERS

26. I observed no more than a sprinkling of well-trained Soviet foremen and skilled workers in Arsenal No. 1 who measured up to the standards set by their German counterparts. I found the average skilled worker to be unreliable and unconscientious. A Soviet craftsman would sacrifice quality for quantity of production. For the sake of higher wages, it was more important to fulfill or overfulfill production norms than it was to maintain a required quality standard. This shortcoming was particularly noticeable in a plant engaged in the production of precision instruments. But this criticism does not apply in full force to female skilled workers. Soviet women

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on the efforts of the rest of the plant. This was the cause of considerable inefficiency in the utilization of manpower. The assembly shop rarely had any work to do at the beginning of a month because the production shops failed to deliver the required parts. The Soviet workers in the shop used to while away their hours playing chess during these monthly periods of idleness.

4. On the other hand, the end of each month witnessed frantic activity. The monthly plan had to be fulfilled at all costs. Critical parts which had been unavailable earlier in the month arrived in the last few days before the 30th. The assemblers in the shop often had to put in long overtime hours in order to meet the monthly quota on time.
5. I attribute this strange production rhythm to the Soviets' failure to master internal plant planning methods. They developed no precise production schedules based on scientific time studies such as were customary in the Zeiss plants in Germany. Soviet plans provided for no continuity but were based on rigid adherence to monthly production quotas.
6. It is possible that the Soviets underestimated the difficulty of producing the precision parts required for geodetic instruments, and that inexperienced Soviet workers were unable to produce these parts on time. If so, this could be an explanation for the erratic production of these instruments. For example, the camera assembly shop which handled less complicated photographic equipment was not troubled with irregular delivery of parts such as plagued the instrument assembly shop.
7. Difficulty in procuring raw materials also might have been at the root of the irregular delivery of parts to the instrument assembly shop. The assembly shop at Zeiss, Jena, always maintained a stock of parts equivalent to four or five days production in order to meet just such exigencies. There was no effort made to establish a stockpile in the assembly shop of the Soviet plant. I once suggested that the shop cease operations for one month in order to accumulate adequate stocks, but was rebuffed with the answer that this was impossible in a Soviet plant.
8. The shortage of well-trained Soviet foremen and technicians was another factor which upset production planning. In my opinion it is necessary to have foremen and technicians who have both a practical knowledge of the work at hand and a broad enough general knowledge to be able to establish sensible production norms and schedules. Although there were capable Soviet designers at Arsenal No. 1, there were but few well-rounded foremen.
9. Another shortcoming of Soviet planning and production techniques was their failure to allow sufficient time for the production of precision instruments. Relatively little time is required to produce an instrument of moderate accuracy but a considerable increment of time is needed to obtain that extra precision called for in a quality instrument. The Soviets failed to realize this, perhaps because of their emphasis on piece rate production. As a result the instruments produced at Arsenal No. 1 failed to achieve that degree of accuracy which made the Zeiss instruments world-famous.

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working in the plant were far more conscientious than the men and proved to be skilled at exacting, detailed work.

27. I believe that a capable foreman requires not only training in a specialized field, but also general instruction in related crafts. A valuable foreman is not merely a narrow specialist. He must have that breadth of training and experience which enables him to judge a finished product for accuracy and over-all workmanship. Soviet foremen were completely lacking in this qualification. Not only did they lack adequate training in their specific fields of specialization, but were unequipped to tackle problems outside of these specialized areas. They simply were taskmasters who were employed to see that the workers kept on the job. 25X1C

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The source was overly impressed with several of his "discoveries" about Soviet society; for example, the obvious observation that the Soviet worker, a product of a society which has never witnessed the political freedoms and economic prosperity of western European democracies, was not motivated by the same range of aspirations and expectations as his western European counterpart. In the opinion of [redacted] he exaggerated the importance of this factor to the point where he implied that the average Soviet worker was almost incapable of finding dissatisfaction with his present existence.

This report can only be considered fairly reliable in view of the source's limited acuity of observation and proclivity to generalize.

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